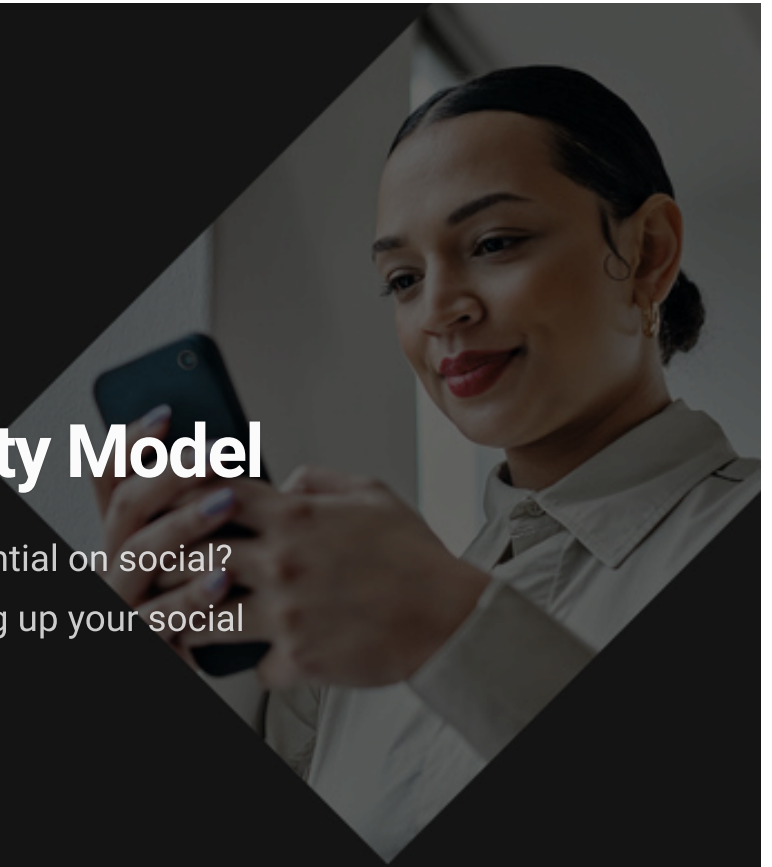


GUIDE

The Social Media Management Maturity Model

Is your organization optimizing its potential on social? Here's a practical framework for leveling up your social media team.



Social media has become an essential component of every organization's marketing strategy, regardless of its vertical or size.

While the landscape has matured over time and we are seeing all kinds of companies thrive on social, many social media managers are still facing challenges in scaling their efforts and unlocking their organization's potential. Brandwatch's Director of Social Media puts it well:

“We now have social media directors, people who have worked in the field for a while but are now senior, leading teams and able to advocate for bigger budgets for the first time. The world of social media still feels chaotic, even though the job of social media manager has been around for 10 years. Senior leaders might

understand that social is important but won't necessarily know how to really compete with the best of the best. Organizations aren't leveling up because they don't know how."

— Meghan Meeker, Director of Social Media at Brandwatch

This is where Brandwatch's Social Media Management Maturity Model can help. This framework enables brands to assess their level of maturity against a set of attributes and behaviors and provides a roadmap for optimizing the social media function.

To create the model we interviewed 15 internal experts with over 60 years of combined experience in social media management. These professionals work in various client-facing roles, including customer success, strategy and insights, and professional services. Their extensive expertise spans across a wide range of companies, from small businesses to global corporations – they know what it means to be the best of the best.

How to use this guide:

This guide serves as a tool for leaders in social media to evaluate their organization's current social media management maturity level. It'll help you identify and address operational, strategic, and governance challenges within your organization, and learn strategies to help your brand maximize its overall impact on social.

The three stages of social media maturity

Each stage of the model presents specific behaviors or challenges that can help show organizations where they fit on the model. You may already have a good idea of where your organization sits just by looking at the above graphic. Read on to discover what the levels of maturity look like across key aspects of social media management, including strategy, senior buy-in, and governance. Plus, discover the practical steps you can take to advance your team.

Beginner

At the beginning of their social media journey, organizations often lack the basics: a clear strategy, investment from leadership, and effective workflows. Social media may not have a dedicated owner, or have an owner that's juggling multiple roles and responsibilities at the same time.

Typically, organizations at this level will have the following traits:

Lacking clear strategy: The absence of a clear strategy is the biggest obstacle for brands at this stage, and this creates an uncertain future. These organizations struggle to create effective content because they don't have a clear content development plan.

Underestimating the value of social: Another challenge at this stage is that the importance of social media is often overlooked, and its value is neglected within the organization.

Inadequate processes and documentation: Meanwhile, there may not be any formal processes or documentation, which hinders efficiency and consistency within the organization.

How to level up from beginner

Whether you're part of an organization that is just starting to establish its social channels or already has an active presence, you should start here.

Decide on your goals

For brands at the beginner stage, goals may include:

- Increasing brand awareness
- Growing social presence
- Connecting with a specific community
- Creating a central location for all social media initiatives

Conduct a social media audit

If you already have a social media presence, an audit will give you an overview of all existing initiatives and help identify potential gaps and opportunities to improve. A social media audit may include:

- Identifying owned social media channels and why these channels are important to your brand
- Frequency of posting
- Types of content shared
- Who currently holds the ownership of social
- Social media performance overview per network

Create a simple social strategy

To advance from the beginner stage, organizations should lay out a simple social media strategy that outlines what they're looking to achieve and a plan that details how to get there.

Often, companies don't know what type of content they should be putting out. If that's the case in your team, keep tabs on what competitors and industry leaders are doing and what works well for them.

"Keep an eye on brands that excel on social media, whether they're competitors or other companies, to see how they use social platforms to get more engagement and grow their fan base. Analyze the quality of the content they share and identify what makes it so good. Can you employ similar strategies to drive effectiveness?"

— Jake Larman, Senior Commercial Account Executive, Brandwatch

Pro tip: One of our experts, Niall Grogan, Team Lead, North EMEA Account Management at Brandwatch, recommends creating content pillars or areas of focus with specific objectives to inspire content ideation. For example, brand awareness content that focuses on engagement, or product announcement content that aims to convert your audience. Getting the mix right for your organization is key.

Once you decide what content you'll be sharing, put some structure around posting. This will allow you to test out different posting times with a view to optimizing the cadence of your content.

Lay the foundation for growth

Consistency and structure enable brands to focus on key metrics and lay a good foundation for tracking ROI.

By grouping similar posts as mentioned above, social media managers can analyze their performance against their distinct objectives.

They can also track and report on general growth metrics over time, showing how an early-stage strategy is working and the potential it could reach with more investment.

Organizational skills are key for laying a good foundation for growth. Defining who has the final sign-off on publishing and creating universal naming conventions for campaigns and other marketing assets is a good place to start.

As organizations evolve and become more organized, they might start exploring other ways to build brand awareness, such as paid social. Paid social can boost your social media efforts, drive faster results, and help turn your social team into a revenue-generating team. In order to claim that budget, social teams will need to convince leaders of the value and there are some good tips upcoming on how to have those conversations.

Mid-level

In the second stage of maturity, organizations transition to a more sophisticated approach to social media. Our experts agree that those at the mid-level often come to them with a strong vision and a solid foundation they can build upon. And this stage allows room for experimentation in the strategy, whether with different content types or new workflows and tools.

Organizations at this mid-level maturity stage will commonly display the following traits:

A strategic approach: At the second stage of maturity, organizations tend to have adopted a more strategic approach to their social media efforts.

"The more mature a company becomes, the more strategic it gets. So it's less of how do I do it? But more, why do I do this, and what do I want to achieve with it?"

— Niall Grogan, Team Lead, North EMEA Account Management at Brandwatch

Clearly defined KPIs: Once an organization has established its baseline and how it's growing, the next step is to create more ambitious targets for social media teams to aim for. This helps marketers track progress over time and use the insights gleaned from the data to make better decisions.

Some level of executive buy-in: In terms of leadership buy-in, there may be some challenges in convincing senior leaders to invest in new team members or the tools that will help the social team scale their efforts.

How to level up from mid-level

There are two key areas to develop in to help reach the next level: Get a seat at the leadership table and create new objectives around efficiency.

Securing leadership buy-in

Organizations at the mid-level stage of maturity may start building more operational efficiency by investing in or upgrading their social media management tool, so it'll scale with them. To do this, the team will need to make a strong case to leadership.

Our experts shared several tactics for gaining leadership buy-in:

- Run a process audit. It involves evaluating all existing processes within an organization's social media operations to identify the areas that could be further optimized or explored. For example, trend analysis, brand monitoring, content ideation, or crisis management. Teams can present a compelling story to leadership by showing how additional investment could help save time and money or improve results in these areas.
- Surface positive usage data within the organization. Internal usage data can become handy when an organization is looking to scale or achieve further adoption of a social media management tool. This data can help demonstrate the tool's effectiveness in enabling the collaborations that get results. Sometimes leadership is hesitant simply because they are unaware of how important a tool is and how many users are active daily.
- Provide an easy-to-digest overview. Giving leadership a clear summary of initiatives and outcomes across all regions in one place can prove tremendously valuable. It helps senior leaders better understand the social's overall performance record and make the case for further investment stronger.

Create new objectives around efficiency

As mentioned above, at this point in their journey, brands typically embrace a new set of objectives focused on process improvement, gaining better oversight of all social media activity, and increasing scalability as a result. Now is a good time to think about return on investment and risk mitigation. For example:

- Time saved: Organizing efforts in one platform boosts team collaboration and coordination.
- Efficiency: A centralized platform for social media management initiatives encourages adoption and enables efficient management across all areas of social, including regular posting, ad campaigns, and social customer support.
- Better customer relationship management: Advanced social media management tools can typically be integrated with your CRM platform. This means your teams will have a comprehensive view of your audience, enabling them to manage these relationships more effectively.
- Action social media insights faster: Streamlined social media management processes can help teams access information faster using automatic reports and dashboards, accelerating decision making.
- Greater control: Bringing everything together on one platform provides a better overview of all social activities within the organization, meaning leaders can ensure strategies and guidelines are being followed.

Advanced

At this stage organizations are deeply committed to and possess expert-level knowledge of all aspects of social media management. Mature social media teams rely heavily on using advanced tools and data for decision-making.

“From my experience, more mature customers are the ones who are looking left and right and looking at what others are doing, and not the ones who are solely focused on themselves.”

— Patrick Schwertfeger, Team Lead Customer Success DACH, Brandwatch

Advanced organizations often have several traits in common:

Cohesive global strategy: Mature organizations prioritize clear communication to align objectives, goals, and strategies across the organization. They typically have an effective process for handling all things social media, and their efforts are centralized. In some cases, strategy is centralized at headquarters, with execution delegated to local teams. In other cases, local teams receive more autonomy due to their local knowledge and potential for greater performance. There is some debate about the benefits of each approach here, so it will depend on your organization.

Consistent brand image: Advanced organizations work to ensure brand consistency across all communication channels and markets.

Experimentation: With fully invested leadership and a culture of learning, mature social teams welcome and encourage experimentation to improve outcomes and enjoy deep trust from the wider organization.

Focus on customer experience and advocacy: Brands at this stage recognize the importance of brand advocates, and maintaining customer satisfaction levels is a top priority. Mature organizations aim to create seamless consumer experiences across all touchpoints – for example, the customer support team may focus on reducing their response time online. Social teams at this stage will also focus on growing their influencer programs and use them to extend their reach and boost brand credibility.

A well-oiled machine: At the advanced stage of their maturity, all social teams (there may be multiple at this stage) are properly set up and operating with confidence. The organization has an internal training plan, product champions, and clear handover documents. Meanwhile leadership promotes alignment and consistency across all social activities.

How to level up further

Build in social listening

For organizations that are more advanced, our experts recommend embedding social listening into their social media strategy and doing research into their brand and related topics to inform messaging and campaigns.

“When it comes to social listening, definitely continue to plug in new terms and gather new ideas to ultimately help your content.”

— Brandon Zoppel, Senior Account Executive, Brandwatch

Build partnerships with your vendors

Seek to have a partnership rather than just a transactional relationship with your social media management vendor. Your vendor's customer success team has a wealth of information gained not only from working with your organization, but also from helping other companies reach new heights.

Don't be afraid to ask the difficult questions. They've tackled similar issues and found solutions for other organizations and their social media teams.

There's no necessary connection between the size of an organization and its social media maturity. It often happens that larger companies tend to advance slower than their smaller counterparts, as more work and stakeholder alignment may be required to mature into the advanced stage. Remember this when it's time for your organization to map out a plan for growth.

Experience the social suite of the future

Want to see how Brandwatch can help you better understand and engage with your consumers?

GET STARTED

